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## **BUSINESSES AND THE COMMUNITY AGREE ON VISIONS OF A ROBUST AND SUSTAINABLE POST-COVID-19 ECONOMY**

HONOLULU – Hawai‘i businessowners and community members both envision a post-COVID-19 local economy that departs from the state’s longstanding economic drivers of the past and instead prioritizes diversified industries that promote sustainability and support residents’ basic needs, according to two new reports released today.

These findings and others are reported in two complementary Issue Briefs released today, entitled [\*A Better Kind of Normal: Native Hawaiian and Non-Hawaiian Priorities for Hawai‘i’s Post-COVID-19 Economy\*](#) and [\*Resilient Present, Self-Sufficient Future: An Examination of COVID-19 Impacts on Native Hawaiian Businesses and Preferences for Hawai‘i’s Future Economy\*](#). Both reports are the result of an online survey administered in June 2020 by the Native Hawaiian COVID-19 Research Hui: a collaboration between the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), Kamehameha Schools, and Lili‘uokalani Trust, and in partnership with the Hawai‘i Leadership Forum, Kupu, and the Native Hawaiian Chambers of Commerce. Over 2,000 residents, business owners and nonprofit executives in Hawai‘i responded to the survey.

“These reports provide insight into the interests of Hawai‘i’s residents and businesses for a post-COVID-19 economy. Put simply, there is agreement that our local economy must change and be more self-sufficient moving forward,” said OHA Chief Executive Officer Sylvia Hussey. “These reports are critical because they provide timely data and information intended to help guide policymakers, businesses, foundations, and nonprofits working together to expand sustainable sectors.”

Brandon Ledward, Principal Strategist, Strategy & Transformation Group, Kamehameha Schools, said:

The findings from these reports provide insight into the desires of Hawai‘i residents and the business community. It is a resounding vote for a future that is more economically self-sufficient and sustainable. This affirms the work that we have

started doing, together with partners, to strengthen the agriculture and local food system in Hawai‘i, in order to become more food and economically resilient.

Kupu CEO John Leong agreed, adding:

As we look towards building a stronger and healthier Hawai‘i, this report provides a wonderful vision of what local entrepreneurs and communities see as the direction of our state. It underlines the importance of a regenerative, values-based economy where we lift each other upwards. We all must take a gut check and use this moment in time to re-envision how we diversify our economy through new industries and reimagine our existing economic pillars to make them healthier and more values driven, while also being sustainable and able to breathe life into our islands.

The reports paint a clear desire for change. Hawai‘i residents indicate that our economic future should focus on sustainable and diversified industries such as agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, and fishing and clean, renewable-based energy. Moreover, islanders want our post-pandemic economy to move away from the work force sectors in transportation, and oil and petroleum-based energy as well as the state’s major economic pillars of the past, such as land development for commercial use, government, military and tourism.

Additionally, Hawai‘i residents indicate that they want an economy that focuses on their basic needs: livable wages; local food production and agriculture; and housing and healthcare that are affordable, available, and accessible were identified as key components of a strong, sustainable future economy.

The report also highlights county-specific COVID-19 impacts and future economic priorities. For example, 83% of businesses in Maui County report a negative impact, compared to between 63% and 78% of businesses in the other three counties. Maui County respondents also ranked mainstream tourism as their 10<sup>th</sup> future economic priority, compared to 16<sup>th</sup> place by Honolulu County and 18<sup>th</sup> place by Hawai‘i and Kaua‘i Counties.

The reports also indicate that Native Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians have different views of our islands’ economy.

Education was found to be a higher priority among Native Hawaiians for themselves and their families than non-Hawaiians. This may be in part due to Native Hawaiians being less satisfied with education before COVID-19 and experiencing more negative effects during COVID-19 than non-Hawaiian residents.

Additionally, Native Hawaiian businesses continue to experience negative effects as a result of COVID-19; however these disruptions continue to be less severe for Native Hawaiian-owned businesses than for non-Hawaiian-owned businesses. This may be due in part to Native Hawaiian

businesses being less reliant on tourism as a revenue source, the report says, a finding consistent with results from a [first business impact survey](#).

Native Hawaiian-owned businesses were also found to be less likely to request assistance from the Paycheck Protection Program than non-Hawaiian owned businesses (21% versus 31% respectively). However, both Native Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian owned businesses that requested assistance were equally likely to report receiving support from this program.

“This report clearly demonstrates that Hawai‘i residents and business owners recognize the needs for a radical shift in Hawai‘i economy,” said OHA CEO Hussey. “Unlike our pre-COVID economy, Native Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian community members want a new post-COVID economy that focuses on supporting the needs of local ‘ohana and prioritizes the health of our ‘āina.”

Nālei Akina of Lili‘uokalani Trust said: “the survey findings point to a pathway out of the cycle of poverty in which too many Native Hawaiian families are mired.”

These reports are the third and fourth publications co-produced by the Native Hawaiian COVID-19 Research Hui. The goal of the collaboration is to gather and provide data that explore the ways Native Hawaiians have been impacted by the pandemic and the systemic conditions that place our communities at greater risk and inform pathways for moving forward to create a new normal.

The data for these reports are from the hui’s ongoing survey to assess local perceptions of what Hawai‘i’s economy should look like after the pandemic. To participate in the *Hawai‘i’s Economy: Visions of a Better Normal Survey*, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HIEconomicVisions> or <https://www.oha.org/economicvisions>.

In May, the hui released the [COVID-19 Impacts on Native Hawaiian Businesses Issue Brief](#) that detailed the challenges, needs of potential of Native Hawaiian businesses during the pandemic.

In July, the hui released [Native Hawaiians At-Risk of Intimate Partner Violence During COVID-19](#) that reported on the vulnerabilities and potential impact of COVID-19 on Native Hawaiians experiencing or at-risk of intimate partner violence.

More information about the Native Hawaiian COVID-19 Research Hui and its projects, including the two new reports, can be found at <https://sites.google.com/ksbe.edu/nh-covid19/home>.

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#### **About the Office of Hawaiian Affairs**

Established by the state Constitutional Convention in 1978, OHA is a semi-autonomous state agency mandated to better the conditions of Native Hawaiians. Guided by a board of nine publicly elected

trustees, OHA fulfills its mandate through advocacy, research, community engagement, land management and the funding of community programs. Learn more at [www.oha.org](http://www.oha.org).

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